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ABSTRACT

The booklet presents transcripts of six radio programs dealing with education in China. Part of the National Public Radio's series entitled "Options in Education," the programs are based on a two-week tour of Chinese schools, colleges, libraries, and day care facilities by one of the radio show hosts. The first program offers insights into activities of children in a neighborhood day care center in Canton and contrasts environments of urban and rural schools throughout China. The second program focuses on reading, writing, and English language instruction of students in junior high schools throughout China. In the third program, students in an arts college are interviewed regarding their attitudes toward and familiarity with art and music from western nations. The fourth program describes English language proficiency of students in a Peking teacher training institution. Student attitudes toward the teaching profession are also discussed. The final two programs focus on preparation for Peking University entrance examinations, increasing emphasis on higher education, and on the interest of the Chinese people in studying foreign languages. (DB)

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OPTIONS IN EDUCATION
TRANSCRIPT:
"EDUCATION IN CHINA, ONE-SIX"

A co-production of
National Public Radio & the
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Program No. 188:
This transcript includes all six transcripts on China.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	1
CLASS SOUNDS OF TEACHERS, STUDENTS IN DAY CARE AND PRIMARY SCHOOLS	1

"EDUCATION IN CHINA, ONE"

CLASS SOUNDS OF TEACHERS, STUDENTS IN DAY CARE AND PRIMARY SCHOOLS

REINHARDT Children in a primary school in the People's Republic of China. China has more than 200 million students, crowded classrooms, few teachers and a desperate shortage of higher education facilities.

(Children singing and playing.)

REINHARDT I'm Barbara Reinhardt for NPR's Options in Education. My co-host, John Merrow, spent two weeks in the People's Republic of China recently, visiting schools, colleges, libraries and day care centers. And with this edition, we begin a six part sound portrait of education in China.

(Children singing.)

REINHARDT A neighborhood day care center in Canton. "Solidarity Forever," is the only English song these children know. They learned it for their foreign visitors. Day care, which the Chinese call kindergarten, is limited to the cities. In the country, where 80 percent of the people live, grandparents still take care of the kids. Day care centers in the cities are open from 7:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., six days a week, for kids from three to seven years old. This one in Canton has 400 students and 40 teachers. Tuition is 60 cents a month.

MERROW In the background you can hear the children at this kindergarten, putting on a little play. The children here work on physical activities, on singing and dancing and speaking. There's no work on writing or reading, although that may take place at home for some of these children, the children of doctors and so on and so forth. The curriculum, as such, does, as I say, stress those things and it also stresses teaching them the five loves. Love of the motherland, love of the people, love of science, love of labor and love of common property.

(Piano music over.)

TEACHER The children here are six years old, and they're of the senior class. The senior class.

MERROW The senior part of the kindergarten.

TEACHER Yes. You see, all the children here are divided into three grades, senior, middle and junior.

MERROW What are they working on?

TEACHER They're now drawing. First the teacher draws the picture here.

MERROW On the blackboard.

TEACHER On the blackboard.

MERROW It looks like a power shovel, a steamshovel.

TEACHER And then all the children are drawing according to the

teacher's sample. Just imitated.

MERROW So it is, it's a power shovel with four wheels and a crane going up, and a chain is coming down and picking up a little house, and then all the kids have pencils and paper and they're sitting at tables, six to a table, drawing with colored pencils or crayons. And also looking curiously at us.

What are children in kindergarten taught about the United States, if anything at all?

INTERPRETER I have to ask the teacher here.

MERROW Ask the teacher.

INTERPRETER She says, "We teach the children that the American people are great people and United States is a great country." Yeah, that's what the teacher said.

MERROW The children in this classroom, the senior part of the kindergarten, seven years old, five of them are telling a story now to the other 25 or so.

(Children telling story.)

MERROW He was just corrected by the teacher.

(Children telling story.)

MERROW Will you tell me what the story is that they're telling?

INTERPRETER The story is about a little horse. The little horse goes up to the stream and he just intends to cross it, but he wonders whether it is shallow or deep. So he asks the buffalo. The buffalo says, "Oh, it is not deep at all."

MERROW But the buffalo is much bigger.

INTERPRETER But the buffalo is much taller, and so as soon as the horse begins to cross the stream, a little animal, a small one, comes up and says, "No, don't cross it. It's too deep for you." But the horse insists to try it himself. So at last he crosses it and the water is not deep and not shallow either.

MERROW Is there a moral? Is there a lesson being taught here?

INTERPRETER It is just a story.

MERROW The children have memorized the story?

INTERPRETER Yes, they have to. The teacher tells them time and again, and they try to remember it and recite it.

MERROW Do they know many stories like this?

INTERPRETER Yes.

MERROW Can they also write the story, or does that come later?

INTERPRETER I'm afraid not, just because now they can only write a few words.

MERROW That would be later on.

INTERPRETER Yeah. But just through this they can raise the ability of thinking and speaking.

MERROW Thank you.

(Music over.)

MERROW Right now there's a gymnastics exhibition going on. Kids in outfits. Earlier the children sang a song which was part of a campaign that goes on in almost all Chinese schools, or kindergartens or primary school. It's called, "Learn from Li Fong." Now, that was a campaign initiated by Mao Tse Tung in 1962, but begun again in 1977 after the end of the cultural revolution. The idea is to have children and young people emulate Li Fung, who was a peasant, a member of the People's Liberation Army who was killed in 1961, and Li Fong is praised for his lover of the motherland and service to others. The children are taught about him. He is held up as a model. They are supposed to emulate him and therefore grow up to do greater service to their country. There are memorials to Li Fong in many places in China. There are even -- there are stories about how Li Fong helped an old woman do this and such, how he rescued someone drowning. Cynics have noted that some of these memorials have pictures of Li Fong at an early age, and they have then wondered out loud, scathingly, how it is that a photographer happened along to take pictures of this then anonymous Chinese youth doing things which only later turned out to have heroic significance. But, cynics aside, it's an important part of Chinese education, "Learn from Li Fong."

REINHARDT A day care center, called a kindergarten, in Canton, in the People's Republic of China. Teachers are paid the equivalent of $30.00 a month. Normally, kindergarten is for children 3 to 7, but there's a trend toward beginning primary school earlier, at age 7 or even 6. Nearly every Chinese child goes through six years of primary school. The figure is 95 percent for China, compared to 99 percent in the U. S.

MERROW I'm in the courtyard of a primary school in Nanjing, one of China's larger cities. And school hasn't started yet, although I can hear different sounds. I can hear sounds of kids playing, but I can also hear, as I get closer, the sounds of some children organized That is, some children already practicing their spelling, it sounds like. It's a recitation of phonetic spelling, part of China's attempt to Romanize its own language. That's where I'm heading, to find those classrooms.

(Children singing.)

MERROW I said it was one courtyard with two buildings. Wrong again. It's actually three courtyards with rows of buildings separating the courtyards, and this is a lot bigger school than I thought when I walked in. In this room there's recitation going on, but maybe I can stick a microphone in anyway.

(Children reciting.)

MERROW The teacher's here already. One young kid is in front of the room, leading the other children. Something from memory, as these are still younger children.

(Children reciting.)

MERROW That's a morning story. Two kids up in front were the main actors and they were taking turns, though. Everybody knew that story pretty well.

(Children reciting.)

MERROW I've been invited to sit down in this classroom. This is a morning story, and Americans would recognize this as an elementary school classroom. Some of the kids' cutouts are on the wall, not very many, and there are children's posters that aren't quite so revolutionary in nature. Over the blackboard of course, Chairman Mao and Chairman Hua. There is a poster of a member of the PLA, the People's Liberation Army. I've seen that in a couple of classrooms in here.

REINHARDT That primary school in Naning, in the People's Republic of China, has about 2,000 students, ages 7 through 12. Besides spelling and phonics, the curriculum includes math, Chinese history, geography, elementary science, physical education, music, art and political thought. Children begin studying English at age 9. School, like just about everything else in China stops from noon to 2:30. In the cities children might join their parents for a meal at their factories or workplaces, or perhaps they just stay at school and play. In the country, children use most of their two and a half hour break for farm work.

MERROW Good morning. Good morning. How do you do? How do you do?

STUDENT How do you do?

STUDENT Welcome to school, our school.

MERROW Oh, thank you very much.

STUDENT Welcome.

MERROW Well, thank you very much. I am getting a warm welcome. I am very happy to be here.

STUDENT Where you come from?

MERROW I am from the United States. I am an American.

STUDENT Oh, American.

MERROW Yes. And I'm very curious about your school.

(Children reciting.)

REINHARDT That school in Naning, with over 2,000 students, has fewer than 100 teachers. The average class, about 50 students. Nearly all the teachers are women. To teach in primary school in China, by the way, all you need is the equivalent of a high school education. There's a special high school, called normal school, for would be

primary school teachers. That's the way the U. S. system worked 75 or 100 years ago. As John worked his way through classrooms in China, he was real contrasts between urban and rural schools. For one, rural students have poorer facilities. Another difference, sophistication. Children in the country had never seen Americans before. At one country school, John was greeted with traditional Chinese hospitality, a round of applause.

(Children applauding.)

MERROW This is the courtyard of a primary school and a junior middle school, a combined school. We're the first Americans ever to visit this school, and we're the first foreigners, non-Chinese, to come here since 1972. That is we're the first Americans since liberation. There may have been some Americans here before 1949. We're being greeted by -- in the traditional Chinese way, by applause. In fact there are kids coming out from all over the place. This is a courtyard on a hill. The kids are ages 7 to 15. 7 to 11 is primary school and 12 to 15 is junior middle school. There are about 200 kids in all in this school, and the Americans are creating quite a sensation, as you can hear.

(Children applauding.)

MERROW This is a small village about 80 miles outside of Naning. About 200 kids go to school here. Some board. Right now it's the middle of the day and they're interrupting -- we're interrupting their work period. The middle of the day is given over to work, to improve the school grounds, or to work in the rice fields which surround most of the school. The school itself is right next to the dam, a very impressive dam that holds 77, almost 78 million kilos of water, and irrigates over 18,000 acres. It was built in 1958. It has meant a great deal to the capacity, to the rice growing capacity of the land, and I'm sure the school children have helped till that land. Kids are coming out from all over the place now.

(Children applauding.)

MERROW This is the high point of their day, at least. It may be quite awhile. It's the high point of my day, that's for sure.

(Children applauding.)

MERROW On one side of the courtyard one row of buildings are sleeping rooms, which I assume are for the teachers. There are two beds to a room with mosquito netting that goes around each bed. The beds really are not much more than hard -- pieces of hard wood. This must be the head teacher, because he has a whole room to himself. There's a dirt floor. The room's about, oh, 10 feet by 12 feet. One window -- two windows and a little skylight, and friendly smiles wherever we go. Aha, you come out one side of the courtyard and there's the basketball court. There's a basketball court everywhere you go in China, or everywhere we've been, anyway. And right beyond the basketball court, rice field, rice field, rice field. Terraced. Everything is terraced here. It's not flat land, except in the river valley itself. So that the Chinese people here are using every bit of available space for growing their crops.

On another side of this courtyard -- now, the courtyard

is about 300 feet long and 75 feet wide, and one of the short sides is a classroom, several classrooms. This one is open on one side, or nearly open on one side. There are no windows. There are just some wood lattice spacing, and then there are desks. Two kids to a desk, and there are going to be about 50 kids to the classroom, I think. Some of the kids are going back into the classroom, sitting down. And in the classroom itself, whitewashed walls, open to the weather. Kids have their books and they're working on mathematics. So this would be -- they're doing cosine, angles, Angle A, Angle B, Angle C, and they have a little notebook to do their work on and a mathematics book, and on the board itself are some mathematical problems. A is greater than B, B is greater than C, so on and so forth. All those familiar problems. Ah, a protractor -- no, this is called a compass. And here, the little angles, the little plastic things for drawing the angles, the half-circle and the triangle. The kids use fountain pens.

TECHNICIAN What are those Roman letters on there?

MERROW That's algebra.

TECHNICIAN What?

MERROW That's algebra.

TECHNICIAN Yeah, it must be.

MERROW It is, it's algebra.

TECHNICIAN Yeah, sure.

MERROW X is smaller than A, right?

TECHNICIAN Yeah.

MERROW A is smaller than B, so on and so forth. There you go.

TECHNICIAN Can they do this in Chinese?

MERROW Huh? Sure, oh, sure. That's a universal language.

TECHNICIAN Hun?

MERROW That's a universal language, algebra. Mathematics is universal language.

TECHNICIAN Oh, is it?

MERROW Sure. Sure.

TECHNICIAN Oh.

MERROW This may be a classroom some day, but it's not now. It's a room like the other classrooms. It's got a dirt floor, whitewashed walls. Americans don't go to school like this. Here's another classroom. Silent as a tomb. And let's see, here the children in fact are learning a new way of spelling of Chinese. Traditional Chinese is being changed over now to more phonetic spelling, and it

will be easier for Chinese people to learn English. Easier for us to learn Chinese, as well. This classroom, portraits of Chairman Mao and Chairman Hua, and a couple of revolutionary slogans and two revolutionary posters. There are also two electric lightbulbs, naked lights, just hanging down, and that's all. Dirt floor.

The next classroom is pretty much the same. Mao and Hua, revolutionary slogans. This is -- you'll have to bear with me, because I do a little bit of guessing when I'm by myself. On the other side, four more classrooms. Ah, the grades are posted, and each room is pretty much identical to all the ones before it. Dirt floor, desks, two to a person, benches, nothing fancy at all. Nothing at all comfortable. Mao and Hua on the wall. A couple of revolutionary slogans, blackboards made of wood.

Ni hao.

CHILDREN Ni hao.

MERROW I've just attracted a crowd. It's hard not to be impressed by what you see here. These are children who go to school and work for the common good. There's no poverty. The children are -- they're dressed pretty much the same. I mean there are colored shirts and so on here and there. but by and large dress the same. Nobody who looks hungry. Nobody who looks misshapen. There are no deformed or handicapped kids that I've seen. Thank you very much. Thank you. And it's hard not to be impressed by what we see happening here. There's a collective spirit to what's going on here that has transformed this countryside. You only have to imagine what it must have been like back in the 1920s, when this was all owned by absentee landlords and there were great periods of starvation --

(Children applauding.)

MERROW -- that ravaged the countryside, ravaged the population and led to wars. Those things -- that's not happening here in this -- that's not happening in China.

(Children applauding.)

MERROW There must be more than 200 kids here. Thank you. And I have to take a picture.

REINHARDT 150 million Chinese children are in primary school, 10 months a year, 6 days a week, 6-1/2 hours a day. That's 95 percent of the kids between the ages of 7 and 12 or 13, quite an accomplishment. Before the Communist victory, before liberation in 1949, school was for the privileged. Only 20 percent of the population could read. Today, 65 percent are literate. Primary school is the end of formal schooling for most Chinese. Less than 40 percent of the children go on to the next level, middle school. That's where we'll take you in the next part of this special Options in Education series on education in the People's Republic of China.

MERROW Goodbye.

STUDENTS Goodbye.

(Music over.)

REINHARDT The transcript of this complete six part series is available for $3.00. The cassette recordings are also available for $15.00. Send your check or money order to National Public Radio - Education, Washington, D. C. 20036. Let me give you that information again. The transcript of the series, $3.00. The cassette recordings, $15.00. And our address, National Public Radio - Education, Washington, D. C. 20036. And please tell us the call letters of your own local NPR station when you write.

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Program No. 189: "EDUCATION IN CHINA, TWO"

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	1
SOUNDS FROM JUNIOR AND SENIOR MIDDLE SCHOOLS IN THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA	1

"EDUCATION IN CHINA, TWO"

SOUNDS FROM JUNIOR AND SENIOR MIDDLE SCHOOLS
IN THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

TEACHER Let us read our texts, one by one. Who will try?

STUDENT Let me try.

TEACHER All right.

STUDENT (Reading)

REINHARDT Chinese girls in their last year of secondary school, practicing English, studying for the three day exam that will determine whether or not they go on to college.

STUDENT (Reading)

TEACHER Sit down. Who else?

STUDENT Let me try.

TEACHER All right.

REINHARDT I'm Barbara Reinhardt for NPR's Options in Education, with a second in our series on education in the People's Republic of China. My co-host, John Merrow, spent two weeks visiting Chinese schools and colleges, including the equivalent of a U. S. high school, what the Chinese call a junior and senior middle school. This one's on a commune in southern China, a class in politics.

(Teacher lecturing in Chinese)

MERROW What is this lesson about? What are they studying?

INTERPRETER They are studying their political -- they are having their political lessons, and the teacher is explaining to them the relations between productive force and production in feudal societies.

MERROW Would you read what it says on the blackboard?

INTERPRETER "In feudal societies the landlords occupied most of the lands, the cultivated land, and so the peasants had very little land, and then the peasants had to work in the fields owned by the landlords, so they were exploited and oppressed by the landlords, both economically and politically."

MERROW Students here are in the first year of senior middle school. That means they are 15 to 16 years old. There are two senior middle schools here on this commune, 21 junior middle schools, which is 13 and 14 year olds, and this is a political class. There are other classes though, of course, mathematics in particular. They would also take place in the same room. The building's about 25 by 20, a high roof, tile roof, light and open. Just a single room, a one room schoolhouse, really. Brick floor, white kind of stucco, concrete building. Open to the weather pretty much, so that it would be very cold in here in the wintertime. I'm told that in

the wintertime the kids come all bundled up and move around a lot more than they do in the springtime, which it is right now.

The blackboard is made of wood.

(Teacher lecturing.)

REINHARDT China has more than 200 million students, most of them, 150 million, are in primary school, and that's as far as they'll get. Middle school, what we call secondary school, begins at age 13 or 14 and continues for five years, but less than 40 percent of the students get that far. Middle school is divided into junior middle and senior middle schools, first two years, then three, but in many areas, junior and senior schools are combined. That's how it is out in the country on this commune, where the school bell is likely to be a rooster's crowing.

(Rooster crowing.)

MERROW This is an agricultural production class. It looks like all the others, sounds like all the others and is run the same way as the others. Teacher in the front, pictures of Chairman Mao and Chairman Huao on the wall and kids sitting at the desks, listening attentively, taking notes. School goes for seven hours a day, and then later in the afternoon is physical exercise. There are two months vacation a year, a month and a half in the summertime and about 20 days in the wintertime. They study agriculture, history, which is really the relationship between the feudal times and post-liberation, and mathematics.

On this commune, with 59,000 people, there are 73 primary schools, 21 junior middle schools and two senior middle schools. 12,600 children go to school, and that's 98.8 percent of the school age population.

Before liberation, that is before 1949, there were only 37 primary schools in this area, with only 4,000 kids going to school. There is also some kind of adult education, nightime classes. There's a newspaper, produced by the commune itself. Many of the older people don't read the newspaper, though. They're illiterate and they prefer to listen to the radio. In this commune the average worker's salary is 100 yuan per year. That's about $60.00 American money, plus of course food, medical care and those things are provided.

Before liberation, only four people in this village had gone on to the university or to some kind of higher education. Since 1969, however, 500 residents of this commune have gone on to some kind of higher education.

There are 50 children in this classroom and there are a couple of things that an American audience might be interested in. None of the kids wear glasses, and the boys are dressed in blues and kind of a drab gray. But the girls have checked and flowered shirts, not very bright -- they've been through quite a few washings -- but distinctly different from what the boys are wearing. These are 13, 14 and 15 year olds.

(Teacher lecturing.)

MERROW He's demonstrating how a cylinder works, how the force is transferred -- the force is transferred elsewhere. Now, he's reading from a textbook. The students have the same book, are turning to the same pages and following along as he reads. It's hard to imagine too many American students would put up with this kind of instruction or too many American parents would put up with this kind of instruction with their students. It's really old-fashioned, rote learning. Read the textbook aloud, the kids follow along in the textbook, and he has one machine to demonstrate the lesson, but the machine is up here on the teacher's desk, the teacher's podium, and the students are sitting back there. Maybe the students get to come up later on and take a look at it. Maybe they don't.

(Teacher lecturing.)

REINHARDT The school system in China is highly centralized. Decisions are made at the top, in the Ministry of Education in Peking. Teachers teach what they're told to teach and where. China doesn't have enough teachers, especially for the middle schools. That means that teachers out in the country on this commune, for example, may not have any formal training at all, only on the job training from older teachers. Instruction in middle school is pretty much the same everywhere in China. The teacher talks and students stay quiet and listen.

(Teacher lecturing.)

REINHARDT The curriculum at that middle schools and every other one as well, includes Chinese language and literature, math, physics, chemistry, physical culture, English and politics. At this school, agriculture is very important, because most students will end up working in some aspect of agricultural production. China has a policy of combining education and work. Here, two hours a week are set aside for students and teachers to work together in the fields. The work requirement is greatly reduced from what it was during the ten years of the cultural revolution -- that's 1966 to 1976 -- then many schools were shut down entirely, so everyone could work and learn politics. Now, after the cultural revolution, politics, political thought, is an important part of the curriculum. And it's a part of the college entrance exam. Religion is generally ignored or discouraged.

TEACHER We consider that we come from a kind of monkey, we call them, apes, we come from apes.

MERROW That's the theory of evolution.

TEACHER We think so.

MERROW And it is what Chinese people believe?

TEACHER Oh, it's hard to say the Chinese people believe it, but most people believe it. And we have the Peking man, in Peking. Yes, Peking man. At this stage they just walked on the ground with the four -- at the time it was four legs, and as they cannot find food to eat, and then they have to stand up to pick out the fruits on the trees. So as they worked more and more, they became used to walking by their two legs and have two hands free, so that they can

pick up more fruits to eat, for their food.

MERROW This is taught to Chinese children in school.

TEACHER Yes. Yes.

MERROW Do Chinese people today believe in God, worship any sort of God?

TEACHER Very few of them. Most of the Chinese people do not believe God or any religious symbols, but some people do. There are religious people.

MERROW Older people?

TEACHER Mainly older people, and some, very little, a few young people too.

MERROW Where did the young people acquire this belief?

TEACHER I don't know. I really don't know. I don't know how they believe that. For myself, I don't believe God or in any religious symbols.

MERROW Do you recognize that there is anything greater than you?

TEACHER Well, what do you mean by greater than I? Of course, some people are greater than I, yes. Our leaders, they of course are much greater than I. And some other people who are more talent, than I do, but I don't consider they are gods or they are any religious symbols. They're just the common people. I suppose they're more experienced and more intelligent.

MERROW Many people in my country, when they are feeling in need, when they are worried, they will pray. They will pray for help. They will pray for relief. But that is not know, you do not do that?

TEACHER No, we don't do that. If you really have any difficulties you can solve them with your comrades or your neighbors, and then we suppose they can help you. If they don't help you, then you can talk to your authorities or your organizations. If you're a commune member, you can talk to the people's commune or the protection brigade, and they may try their best to help you. And if you prayed for a god to help you, that would be very funny. I don't consider god can help you to do anything or to solve any problem.

MERROW If someone in China wanted to teach others about gods, would that be allowed?

TEACHER According to the constitution of our country, yes, they might be allowed, but we don't encourage people to do that. According to the constitution, people have the freedom to believe god or their religious symbols, but we don't encourage people to do that, because we can see that there's something unscientific.

REINHARDT Mr. Ma finished his schooling a few years ago and is

now a guide for the China Travel Service. Children don't study religion in middle school, but everyone is learning English.

MERROW What is your name?

STUDENT My name is Yu Li.

MERROW How old are you? How old are you?

STUDENT I'm 15 years old.

MERROW Where are you from?

STUDENT I'm from Naning.

MERROW How many people are there in your family?

STUDENT There are four people.

MERROW Who are they?

STUDENT They are my mother, father, brother and I.

MERROW What does your father do? What's your father?

STUDENT My father and sister is a PLA.

MERROW PLA, People's Liberation Army, PLA?

STUDENT Yes.

(Laughter)

MERROW Are you a worker or a student?

STUDENT I am a student.

REINHARDT John is getting his questions from the phrasebook that students use. These students go to what's called a key school, for the specially gifted kids. This one in Naning has over 1,400 students.

MERROW This is the library. It has 20,000 volumes and 46,000 other magazines, periodicals and teaching aids.

LIBRARIAN These are books on Marxism. This is Shakespeare.

MERROW Shakespeare?

LIBRARIAN Shakespeare, yes. Shakespeare, in Chinese, yes. The first row are all technical books.

MERROW And these are?

LIBRARIAN Works.

MERROW Works of?

LIBRARIAN Works of Marx, works of Lenin. Works of Lenin.

MERROW And those over here are --

LIBRARIAN Novels.

MERROW And these must be Chairman Mao.

LIBRARIAN Chairman Mao's books.

MERROW Uh-huh.

LIBRARIAN Is history of German. More than history of -- Western Europeans -- Western Europe.

MERROW Western Europe, uh-huh.

LIBRARIAN These are the novels.

MERROW Novels.

LIBRARIAN Yes.

MERROW Are there novels by Dickens?

LIBRARIAN Yes. Yes.

MERROW This school of 1,469 students and 134 teachers has 30 classrooms and 70 dormitory rooms. It's a boarding school for some students. It's a special school, a more advanced school, one of two key schools for the entire region. Not only for the city of Naning, but a lot of the outlying area. The school itself is 80 years old, but it's only been a key school since 1958. Last year, 13 percent of the graduates went on to higher education. The principal told us about that quite apologetically, saying it was the fault of the Gang of Four. The Gang of Four and Lin Yau have done a great deal of damage to the school, and discipline, political knowledge, morality, all those things had really suffered greatly during the reign of the Gang of Four, but since the downfall of the Gang of Four, the principal said, things have gotten much better.

(Group of children reciting in English.)

MERROW This is one of the fast classes, in English obviously. The senior middle school, and English is one of the required courses and every student must pass in order to graduate. There are 13 students, one standing and reading, the others all reading in unison.

TEACHER Let us read our texts one by one. Who will try?

STUDENT Let me try.

TEACHER All right, please.

STUDENT Each boy was given one roll and no more. They both needed washing. They both ate them with their spoon. But both of the boys were hungry, and the other boys suffered from starvation for three months. At last they got to where they were so hungry that one of the boys who was tall for his age said --

TEACHER Sit down. Who else?

STUDENT Let me try.

TEACHER All right.

STUDENT If this goes on I'm afraid I shall eat the boys who sleep next to me. He said with hungry eyes and the boys laughed at him. The boys got together and thought of a plan. One of us must walk up to the master --

TEACHER This is not a lesson, not a class, but this is extra-curricular activities.

MERROW Are there no boys preparing?

TEACHER But the girls' group is the first group and the boys' group the second group. Now this today is the girls' group make activities here.

MERROW Here's Charles Dickens. Oliver Twist.

After class, the students have exercise, and there's a volleyball game going on right here. There are five games of volleyball going on right here, plus a little bit of basketball. There are some more games going on, up on the adjoining field. It's boys playing badminton.

This is the campus factory, run by students. There are students working here.

TEACHER This is a milling machine.

MERROW Milling machine.

TEACHER Yes. Milling machine. They are making them.

MERROW That's what they make in this factory, milling machines?

TEACHER Yes.

MERROW What happens to the milling machines when they are made?

TEACHER They send these to the technical research stations.

MERROW Do they sell them or do they send them?

TEACHER They get some money back.

MERROW They get some money back. How many machines do they make a year?

TEACHER Thirty machines in one month.

MERROW Thirty machines every month.

TEACHER Slicer machine. A slicer.

MERROW The factory itself's not very big. It's shaped like an L. It's open to the air. It's about 30 feet wide and each leg of the L is about 80 feet long.

Probably the most striking difference between American schools and Chinese schools would be the political nature of schooling

in China. In China, every classroom, or nearly every classroom, has a portrait of Chairman Mao and the current Chairman, Chairman Hua, plus other revolutionary Communist leaders. Many American cla srooms do, though, have a picture of President Jimmy Carter, so maybe that's not such a great difference. Chinese elementary school children are taught about the wisdom of Chairman Hua and the wisdom of previous leaders. It's indoctrination. But then again, an awful lot of elementary schools in this country teach about the wisdom of Jimmy Carter or whoever the President happens to be, and of the greatness of previous American leaders, like Lincoln and Washington, Roosevelt and so forth. So perhaps that strikingly political difference is not so great after all. Perhaps it's a difference of degree and not of kind, and perhaps schools, at least at an early age, are often used for teaching of the basic pillars of the society, that is a certain indoctrination about what the country sees as good and right about itself.

How do you do? Do you speak English? This may sound like a school play yard, but in fact it's not. It's a construction site on the corner of a busy street, and a lot of the little boys are playing, throwing rocks and having a good old time, and the girls are playing in another corner. Sound familiar?

Goodbye. Goodbye.

REINHARDT Naning, one of China's largest cities. City schools in China seem to have a leg up on rural schools. Better facilities, more books. Kids there have a better chance to continue on to college. That's next in this special Options in Education series on Chinese education, college, and special schools for the arts.

(Music over.)

REINHARDT The transcript of this complete six part Options in Education series on China is available for $3.00. The cassette recordings are also available, for $15.00. Send your check or money order to National Public Radio - Education, Washington, D. C. 20036. Let me give you that information again. The transcript of the series $3.00, the cassetted recordings, $15.00, and our address, National Public Radio - Education, Washington, D. C. 20036. And please tell us the call letters of your own local NPR station when you write. Options in Education is a co-production of National Public Radio and the Institute for Educational Leadership of the George Washington University. Principal support for this series is provided by the National Institute of Education. Other funds come to us from Carnegie Corporation of New York and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

Options in Education is written and produced by John Merrow. Natalie Iglitz is our Associate Producer. Charles White is our Assistant Producer, with technical assistance for this program by Chet Hudson and John Widoff. I'm Barbara Reinhardt, and this is NPR, National Public Radio.

Program No. 190: "EDUCATION IN CHINA, THREE"

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	1
THE KWANG SI ART INSTITUTE The students, teachers and music at Kwang Si Institute are the focus of this issue of Education in the Peoples Republic of China. Kwang Si is a specialized college that concentrates on the arts.	1-5

"EDUCATION IN CHINA, THREE"

REINHARDT: Just a few years ago, you wouldn't hear the Minuet Waltz in the Peoples Republic of China. Chopin was persona non grata, along with Beethoven, Frank Sinatra and Rodgers and Hammerstein. In fact most everything Western was pushed aside during the ten years of China's cultural revolution. Traditional Chinese music and art also disappeared and were replaced by revolutionary music, revolutionary art, revolutionary dance. No Minute Waltz, no performances like this on the tsun, a 2 000-year-old Chinese instrument.

Today, music in China is an amalgam, West and East, of new and old. The revolutionary music hasn't disappeared, but now it shares the billing with Chopin and Mozart.

I am Barbara Reinhardt, for NPR's Options in Education, with the third in our series on education in the Peoples Republic of China. My co-host, John Merrow, spent two weeks in China, visiting a variety of schools and colleges, among them the Kwang Si Art Institute in the south of China, near the Vietnamese border.

* * *

THE KWANG SI ART INSTITUTE

REINHARDT: The Institute is really a college for students in music and several other arts -- sculpture, painting, dance, gymnastics. In all, there are 540 students and 180 teachers at Kwang Si, a ratio of three students for every faculty member. China doesn't have very many colleges, only about 600, or very many college students -- less than 900,000 in a country of 900,000,000. So the students at Kwang Si Art Institute, or at any other college, are very special.

Chinese colleges are still recovering from the years of the cultural revolution, in 1966 to 1976. Kwang Si Art Institute was closed during six of those years, and it didn't graduate anyone during the entire ten-year period. Where did everyone go? To farms and factories, where they went to relearn Maoist principles.

Three years after the revolution, in 1979, John visited the Art Institute and found it filled with music, most of it non-political.

MERROW: This is a two-stringed fiddle, or a Chinese violin. The difference here is that the bowstring is between the two strings. If I had to describe its shape, I'd say it looks kind of like a mallet. Slightly curved, it looks kind of like a mallet.

It's just about impossible to get a purer sound here, because there are so many people playing so many different instruments. Walk ten feet away, ... step another five feet, ... This is very much in the open air. In fact, it overlooks a beautiful lake in the city of Na Ning. Here again is another little classroom. Again, it's just a small house. It's about eight feet by eight feet, pretty much open to everything, teacher and the student working together.

This instrument is called a yamuchee. This is a special school. Because this is a minority area, -- there are several areas of China where there are large minority populations -- this school has what amounts to an affirmative action program. It goes out and recruits members of the Chang minority. They still must pass the test, of course, but having passed the test, they can come to this school for training in the arts and they will get special help so then they can go back to their own peoples and preserve that particular culture.

These little studios they've got here, there are three right next to each other. Maybe it's necessary to spend some time in a school like this to conceive of the horror, the enormous significance of the cultural revolution to the people of China. Schools, universities, colleges were closed, just plain closed down, for as long as ten years, five years, six years, simply not admitting students at all. So that means a whole generation of Chinese students, or nearly a whole generation of Chinese students, simply went without. In the middle schools, there was a lot of sloganeering, a lot of political consciousness raising, a lot of travelling around the country and going out to the countryside to work with the peasants. But very little in the way of education. China is going to pay the price for that, for quite a few years to come.

That means when you go to a middle school, you'll often see older students who are trying to catch up. And I've been told of American visitors meeting Chinese who are in their 20's, who are really quite bitter now because they feel they have missed opportunities they may never see again.

This place is a musical paradise, though. And, again, it's hard to imagine what kind of hysteria must have taken over the country that it would allow itself to shut everything down, everything educational down, for so long. Coming to the horns. This is outdoor again, a teacher working with two students. The teacher is conducting and pointing to -- when they make an error, stopping and pointing to the note they missed.

Anyone in China who gets an education beyond middle school is exceptionally fortunate, is very special. Consider this: Less than one percent of the kids who might go on to higher education, that is, those in that age range, actually do go on to some kind of higher education. That could be anything from a university, a college, a foreign language institute, an art school like this one, a vocational school, a technical school, agricultural school. There was great debate over the question of whether it was more important to be expert or read, and it came down heavily in favor of being read. That is, one's politics were far more important than one's intellectual ability or one's expertise. So that, admission to colleges and universities was based on one's politics. And very often, people of no particular bent, particular inclination, no particular gift, were sent off to universities and given what was happening in universities, became equal in status to professors.

Now they say there's a balance between expert and read; both are equally important. You can't get anyone to choose between the two. There's no secret that politics is still a part of things, but it has nowhere near the importance that it once had, or so we're told.

WOMAN: The teachers and the students did not study. They didn't have any classes. And the students wrote character posters, to give their idea about the cultural revolution.

MERROW: And things were very political instead of educational.

WOMAN: Very political, very political. And at the time, there was a wrong idea that they thought -- the young kids thought teachers were all bourgeois intellectuals that should be re-educated. So in a lot of our schools, students put up bit character posters against their teachers.

MERROW: How about you? What did you do during the cultural revolution, beside the travelling? Where you a Red guard?

WOMAN: Yeah, I was a Red guard. And I was wrote some big character posters, and I was selected to the Revolutionary Committee, to be a member on the Revolutionary Committee. Now, school. And we saw to the movement - we called it movement -- of the struggle, transformation and criticism.

MERROW: And the what?

WOMAN: Criticism.

MERROW: Oh, criticism, uh-huh. But you were not learning English at this time, no?

WOMAN: No, no, no study at the time. I went to a peoples' commune, plowing, sewing, harvesting. And evening we would go to peasants' families to talk with them. And actually, we lived with one family of peasants. I learned a little medical work, to work, and later on I worked as a (comments) doctor in the countryside.

MERROW: Which means that you were able to do some very basic things in medical care.

WOMAN: That's right.

MERROW: Tell me now, when you look back, or at the cultural revolution, do you see it as mostly a mistake?

WOMAN: No, I don't think so.

MERROW: Something perpetrated by the Gang of Four?

WOMAN: Yes. The Gang of Four did a lot of bad things in the cultural revolution, and to sabotage the cultural revolution. The motivation of the cultural revolution is good. It's to try to avoid China following the path of Russia, to avoid elite existing in the country, appearing in the country.

But later on, many statistic -- strategic ideas of Chairman Mao were interrupted or disrupted, sabotaged, by the Gang of Four. So it didn't take its course as originally planned. But, of course, we think that Chairman Mao is not a sacred man, and being a great Marxist, he might make some mistakes. But the most important thing is, when we find out the mistakes, then we correct it immediately.

MERROW: This is a second-year student warming up, tuning up.

What is that?

WOMAN: Sola.

MERROW: Sola?

WOMAN: Sola.

MERROW: Sola. It's kind of a -- it's a horn, it's kind of a flute.

WOMAN: (Comments.)

MERROW: Two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, eight sides. It's a wind instruments, eight holes. It's a reed, yes?

WOMAN: Luay.

MERROW: Luay, luay. Oh, yes, uh-huh, all right, uh-huh. We're about to get a little concert.

It's possible that this practice session may be occurring simultaneously because of the educators visiting here. But it's also very clear that this is a practice area, that the students do practice outside, that the students do use all these studios at the same time. So, I don't really think we're seeing anything all that special.

What we are seeing, however, is a very special segment of the Chinese population, because only .7 percent, that is, seven-tenths of one percent of Chinese students, are able to go on to higher education. There, China is clearly backward. It has not kept up, it doesn't have the facilities to provide higher education for all the students who would like to have higher education. These are obviously talented people, though, and I'm sure there are many more who would like to be going to school here. They get here by passing a competitive exam, in this case, of course, a performance exam.

Do you speak English? Do you speak English?

WOMAN: (Comments.)

MERROW: Ah.

WOMAN: (Comments.)

MERROW: Ah, well. I do not speak Chinese. I am an American.

WOMAN: My English is vilely poor.

MERROW: It's better than my Chinese. Have you noticed that? What year student are you? First year, second year, or third year?

WOMAN: I am student.

MERROW: Student, yes. First year?

WOMAN: Three.

MERROW: Third year.

WOMAN: Three year, three year.

MERROW: Student of voice.

WOMAN: Yes.

MERROW: But also piano?

WOMAN: Uh-huh.

MERROW: You also play the piano.

WOMAN: (Comments.)

MERROW: Yes.

WOMAN: No, no.

MERROW: No. Voice.

WOMAN: I sing song.

MERROW: Sing song, yes. When you graduate, will you be a singer?

WOMAN: Yes, yes.

MERROW: You will sing, that will be your work. You will be a professional singer. No, you will be a teacher? No.

WOMAN: Teacher?

MERROW: Yes. Teacher?

WOMAN: No.

MERROW: After graduation, teacher? No. You will be a singer.

WOMAN: Yes.

MERROW: Yes, thank you.

WOMAN: Thank you. (Comments.)

MERROW: This is wonderful. This is beautiful. All this music.

WOMAN: Yes, yes.

MERROW: Thank you so much.

* * *

REINHARDT: A day at Kwang Si Art Institute, a specialized college in the Peoples Republic of China. China has other specialized colleges. They are really the equivalent of professional schools in the U.S., agricultural colleges, engineering colleges, foreign language institutes, even institutes for nationalities, where members of China's minority group study their own cultural traditions.

There are also entire schools for teacher training. That is next in this special Options in Education series on the Peoples

Republic of China, a report on why Mao said teaching in China is like stuffing a duck.

You might want to own a copy of this special six-part Options in Education series on China for your own use or for use in the classroom. It's available in transcript form for $3.00. A set of cassette recordings cost $15.00. Here's our address: National Public Radio - Education, Washington, D.C. 20036.

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Options in Education is written and produced by John Merrow. Natalie Iglitz is our associate producer. Charles White is our assistant producer. Technical assistance for this program by Chet Hudson.

I'm Barbara Reinhardt, and this is NPR, National Public Radio.

Program No. 191: "EDUCATION IN CHINA, FOUR"

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	1
PEKING NORMAL UNIVERSITY Producer John Merrow reports from Peking Normal University, the school said to be the best teacher training institution in China.	2-10

REINHARDT: He's teaching mathematics in a high school in the Peoples Republic of China. Even if you stayed for the entire class, you wouldn't hear a word from any of the 50 students.

TEACHER: (Comments.)

REINHARDT: Chairman Mao Tse-Tung called that method of teaching "stuffing a duck," and he hoped the great proletariat cultural revolution would eliminate that pedogogical approach. He wanted to democratize education, to have teachers also learn from students. But it doesn't seem to have worked.

I'm Barbara Reinhardt from NPR's Options in Education, with Part Four of our report on education in the Peoples Republic of China. My co-host, John Merrow, got a firsthand look at teachers and teaching during his two-week visit to China. He not only saw quite a few ducks being stuffed, he also talked with some of the potential duck-stuffers, college students at China's best teacher training institution, Peking Normal University.

PEKING NORMAL UNIVERSITY

REINHARDT: China needs teachers. It has more than 212 million students in elementary and secondary school. And classes at every grade level average at about 50 students. China is directing many of those students into what it calls the four modernizations -- industry, agriculture, defense and science and technology.

To catch up with other nations, China needs more and better-trained teachers. There's one hitch, however. A number of the students in teacher training institutes don't really want to teach. You'll meet some of them on this tour of Peking Normal University.

MERROW: Peking Normal University has 3,000 students, taking a four-year course to become teachers. The expect to graduate 1,000 new teachers this year. That doesn't sound like very many, and in fact, it's not. But Peking Normal University is the biggest and perhaps the best of the 40 or so teacher training institutions in the Peoples Republic of China. A four-year course, it used to be five years until the great proletarian cultural revolution and the Gang of Four. It was reduced to three years during that ten-year period, and now it's back to four years.

You are all --

STUDENT: Classmates.

MERROW: Classmates. You are all studying to be teachers.

STUDENT: Yes, to be teachers.

MERROW: (Comments) English.

STUDENT: Not in English. Geography.

MERROW: Geography.

STUDENT: Yes.

MERROW: You all speak English very well.

STUDENT: Not well.

MERROW: Oh, yes. Have you studied English for a long time?

STUDENT: Four or five years.

MERROW: Four or five years.

STUDENT: Yes.

MERROW: In junior or middle school?

STUDENT: Well, where -- yes, in middle school we study English. And at the university we study English, too.

MERROW: How long will you be at the university? How many years to become a teacher?

STUDENT: We have the second years. There are four years in the university.

MERROW: Four years.

STUDENT: We are the second-year students.

MERROW: And you will teach geography.

STUDENT: Yes. We are the geography department students.

MERROW: And where will you teach? In Peking or -- where will you be sent to teach?

STUDENT: In the whole country.

MERROW: The whole country.

STUDENT: Yes.

MERROW: If you are able to choose where you will teach, if you can choose, where would you like to teach?

STUDENT: Not only in Peking, but all the country.

MERROW: And where would you like to teach?

STUDENT: (Comments.)

MERROW: But where, what city, what --

STUDENT: Obey the distribution, obey the distribution.

MERROW: So the state will tell you where to teac.

STUDENT: When we finish our study, the university will distribute our to every part of the country.

STUDENT: Time is up.

MERROW: Time is up. Thank you so much. Bye-bye.

The Peoples Republic of China has a teacher shortage. In fact, it doesn't ever know how great the teacher shortage is. It only knows that it needs teachers in every field. Right now in China, teachers are trained at three different levels generally. There is what's called a normal school. It truly is like a high school, like what's a middle school here. And at normal school, primary school teachers are trained so, in effect, a person may graduate from high school and then go right back to teaching in a primary school.

Then there are normal colleges and normal universities. There are about 40 of these, and there's really not much difference except in the way they are run. Normal colleges are controlled by the local government, that is, by the Revolutionary Committee of the city. A normal university, however, is under the guidance of the Ministry of Education, that is, it is run by the national government.

There are other ways to become a teacher besides going to normal school, normal college or normal university. For one thing, some graduates from other universities, that is, not from teacher training institutions, do become teachers. But more likely, a person who is going to be a teacher would go to a training course, a short course in a special field, maybe three weeks, maybe three months, maybe even six months. It would be, really, a kind of an in-service training back in the United States. But for some teachers here in the Peoples Republic, that's all the training they get. Some don't even have that much. We've met teachers whose only training consisted of on-the-job training, organized by other teachers at their school.

China is desperate for teachers. This is a lecture hall at Peking Normal University, in the history building. There are about 100 students in this classroom. The professor is reading from his lecture notes. He has a (comments) and a microphone to amplify what he is saying throughout the classroom.

I'm not sure I can ask this question, but -- properly, say it properly. But in the schools I have been in, I have seen only one teaching method. The teacher stands up in front of the room and talks, and the students sit there and take notes.

MAN: Jot down.

MERROW: Jot down, yes. Is that -- is teaching like that everywhere in China?

INTERPRETER: All right. She said, that's not all you mentioned, that method is just one of them. For example, if you want to have a lecture for the students, then the professional speaker will talk all the time and the student will jot down the important points. This is one of the methods, one form of class teaching.

You have another kind, for this fashion: The teacher will give some problem for the student to prepare and they ask them to (comments) in the group. And the teachers will guide the discussion. This is another kind. And they'll also have experiment in the class,

experiment in the laboratory. This is another kind of teaching, another kind of a class activity.

MERROW: I've had tea and a briefing, both traditional for visitors at Peking Normal University. And I've learned a couple of interesting things. At tea and the briefing, I was told that the cultural revolution has left its imprint in at least two ways. One is a missing generation, six or seven years, of no students and no graduates. Two, those who did then come out are not particularly competent. They didn't learn very much in middle school because middle school was a lot of politicizing. And so now they are not especially competent, even though they are graduates of Peking Normal University.

There may be a third and perhaps even more telling effect, and that would be the attitudes of a whole generation who went to school as young folks during the cultural revolution, and listened time and again and again to harangues about teachers, teachers being bourgeoisie, teachers being revisionist, teachers being corrupters, teachers being not appropriate models to look up to. So there may be an awful lot of young Chinese who in fact do not want to be teachers and who do not look up to teachers, do not perhaps therefore value the process of education.

We're on our way right now, as a matter of fact, to talk to a class of students who have been studying English for five years, in middle school before this and then here for two years. And these students are studying to be teachers. It'll be interesting to learn whether they want to be teachers.

Now, this is after English class. These are sophomore or second-year students.

How long have you studied English?

STUDENT: I studied English in this school for more than one year. Then before I came here, I studied English for more than three years.

MERROW: At middle school.

STUDENT: Yes, at middle school.

MERROW: And when you graduate, you will be a teacher?

STUDENT: Yes, I will be a teacher.

MERROW: Of English?

STUDENT: Maybe, yes, English teacher.

MERROW: That is what you are studying to be, you are studying to be an English teacher?

STUDENT: Yes.

MERROW: Where will you teach?

STUDENT: Maybe in a middle school.

MERROW: Do you know where?

STUDENT: I don't know. Everywhere.

MERROW: Why do you want to be a teacher?

STUDENT: It's hard to say. Because before I came to the college, I was a teacher in the middle school, for four years.

MERROW: Tell me, where will you teach when you graduate?

STUDENT: I don't know, exactly. That's up to the -- our authorities' assignment. I hope I will teach in a middle school in Peking or in Peking's colleges.

MERROW: You would like to stay here in this city.

STUDENT: Of course, everybody likes it. Of course, if I'm assigned to teach in a country school, I will go there.

MERROW: You will not be very happy if you are assigned to teach in the autonomous region of Tibet.

STUDENT: Of course, I wouldn't be so happy as I will teach in Peking. But I think it's also -- I can also work well there.

MERROW: You're smiling bravely, as they say.

STUDENT: I am flattered.

MERROW: But I think you have your fingers crossed, yes? You know that expression? It means, cross your fingers and hope for Peking.

STUDENT: Yes, hope for the best.

MERROW: And you, why do you want to be a teacher?

STUDENT: To be frank, I really don't want to be a teacher at all. That's true.

MERROW: And now? Do you want to be a teacher now?

STUDENT: No, do not.

MERROW: You want to continue to be a student?

STUDENT: No, not always a student. But I like to work for some other -- at some other job, in the travelling agent, maybe.

MERROW: And you, how long have you studied English?

STUDENT: I've studied English for more than five years. Before I came here, I studied for three years, I suppose.

MERROW: And where would you like to teach?

STUDENT: Yes, I like this colleague, my fellow student. I don't like to be a teacher at all.

MERROW: You would like to do what then?

STUDENT: I want to work in many departments, but except teacher.

MERROW: Anything but teaching, eh?

STUDENT: Yes, anything but teaching.

MERROW: Why do you feel that way? What's so bad about being a teacher?

STUDENT: No, being a teacher is not bad, but I don't like to be a teacher.

MERROW: Why?

STUDENT: Ah ha, why? I think because my parents are teachers and my parents want me to be a teacher. But I'm tired of teacher.

MERROW: I'm looking for a teacher. I'm looking for someone who wants to be a teacher. Do you want to be a teacher?

STUDENT: Yes, I do. Before I came here, I was a teacher for five years.

MERROW: Where?

STUDENT: In a middle school in Peking.

MERROW: I see, I see. Would you like to go back to teach in a middle school?

STUDENT: Yes. A middle school or in college.

MERROW: After your final exam, will you ask to go to teach in a college? I mean, do you write a letter saying, I would like to teach in a college, or do you simply get assigned somewhere?

STUDENT: I can't ask to teach in college. I must obey the assignment.

MERROW: There's a great shortage of teachers. There's a need for many teachers out in the country.

STUDENT: Yes, of course. There is a shortage of teachers in our country.

MERROW: So perhaps you will be assigned to teach in a middle school, way away from Peking.

STUDENT: Yes, yes.

MERROW: But you hope not?

STUDENT: I hope I will work in Peking, because my family is in Peking.

MERROW: And you?

STUDENT: I'm very nervous before this microphone.

MERROW: My question, where would you like to teach?

STUDENT: It doesn't seem to make any difference. Of course, the -- at Peking, it's better to stay at Peking.

MERROW: That is what we say in the United States 'the big apple,' the top.

STUDENT: Not only because of that, because Peking is my home town. My home is here.

MERROW: But there is a real shortage of teachers in the Peoples Republic. And so you might be assigned to teach way -- somewhere else.

STUDENT: Then in that case, I'm going there. I would like to go there.

MERROW: You could not say no, right? What would happen to you if you said no, I won't go?

STUDENT: It doesn't seem right.

MERROW: What would happen? Suppose you got a letter saying, go to the autonomous region and teach, and you said no?

STUDENT: It's hard to say.

STUDENT: He will be criticized.

MERROW: Yes, I would think so, yes.

STUDENT: If you can give your reason reasonably, you can stay in Peking, without criticism.

MERROW: I see.

STUDENT: Without being criticized.

MERROW: I see. But you must have a good reason.

STUDENT: Yes.

MERROW: Family -- is family a good enough reason?

STUDENT: Yes, family is a good enough reason.

MERROW: Have you taught? Have you been a teacher?

STUDENT: No, I haven't been a teacher.

MERROW: Why are you studying to be a teacher now?

STUDENT: First reason was, I like to study English. So I volunteered to come here to study English. And then, I think after I came here, I think it's all right to be a teacher. But I don't think it is the best job.

MERROW: What job is better?

STUDENT: I haven't think too much of that.

MERROW: But you will probably be a teacher, yes?

STUDENT: Of course I will be a teacher.

MERROW: At what level?

STUDENT: At what level? I can't tell.

MERROW: What level would you prefer?

STUDENT: Well, middle school or college.

MERROW: Middle school or college. Not primary school.

STUDENT: No.

MERROW: And would you prefer college or middle school? Which one?

STUDENT: I think college is better, of course. Because if I taught in the middle school, I would teach A-B-C every day, so that's too simple for me, I think.

MERROW: Thank you all very much. Very interesting for me.

* * *

REINHARDT: Like more and more Chinese universities and colleges, Peking Normal University has a number of foreigners on its faculty, Australians, New Zealanders, British, Americans. Tina Holmes teaches English to future English teachers.

HOLMES: I think that he is the thief. These two sentences mean the same thing. I consider him to be the thief. And I think that he is the thief. This infinitive construction sounds more formal, it sounds more stilted, than the sentence you would probably use in spoken English, which would be, I think that he is the thief.

So basically, the words can mean the same thing, but 'consider' used in another way may have a slightly different meaning. You can use the word 'consider' like this.

Boy, you really have to think on your feet in Chinese, because -- fortunately, this group has progressed now to the point where they're asking questions that I can't answer, just off the top of my head. You've really got to think about, how do you use these words in the sentences.

MERROW: And our language is probably not the easiest to teach.

HOLMES: It's not, because they want to know why do you do this, why do you say this and what do you say that? And you can't tell them why. But at least, the Chinese authorities are beginning to realize that if they want their students to use English, to speak it, then they have to use different teaching methods than if they just want them to learn by rote. If they want them to converse, then rote

learning will not work.

MERROW: In the middle schools, the teaching of English seems to be by rote.

HOLMES: It is, still, and there are some teachers here now, some foreign teachers who are teaching teachers who will teach in middle schools, and hopefully later they will use some different methods, because they have recognized that rote learning will not help people to converse. It may help them in many ways to learn pronunciation, to learn sentence patterns. But in order to converse, you're going to have to have practice talking. And --

MERROW: In learning their own language, the pronunciation, the sounds, are very important, since sound is more important in Chinese than it is in English, yes?

HOLMES: But the tones are very important in Chinese. In English, we do have tones but we just don't think about it so much. We have intonation, and the intonation in a sentence can make a lot of difference. So we try to teach, too, the different ways of stressing a sentence to make a different meaning.

MERROW: Now, you try to get your class to participate. These students have grown up in traditional schools. Is it hard to get the students to be involved?

HOLMES: It took about a month to get them to actively participate, in the big class. We divided into smaller groups and there, it's much easier. We had about six students in each group. But in the big class, at first, I would say, hold up your hands if you have a question, hold up your hands. And nobody would raise their hands. So --

MERROW: He had a question.

HOLMES: Yeah, he asked the question today. This is after three months. At first, they wouldn't have raised their hand to ask a question. But they have asked very good questions. And, as I say, sometimes it's difficult for me to answer them, because we say things in English without thinking why. They want to know why, and they want to know the difference between two words. And this is a very good way of learning, because in Chinese they make some distinctions between words that we don't make, and in English we make some distinctions that they don't make.

MERROW: Do you understand why the Chinese education system works the way it does?

HOLMES: I'm still trying to learn about the Chinese education system. I don't know definitely why it works the way it does, and I think that there is a lot of confusion still, because the -- what they call the Gang of Four period did cause a lot of disruption, and they still haven't got everything organized.

There is a problem of face. You see, the teachers do not want to lose face. Face is a big thing in China. And if a teacher in China makes a mistake, they lose face. I don't want to be drawn into this because I know that I've got to modify my teaching methods

according to the needs of the students. So sometimes I will make mistakes and then I'll want to change and modify. But to get Chinese teachers to work in this way, I think will be difficult, because they don't like to be seen to make mistakes. They don't like to have to admit that they have made a mistake.

Is that right, do you think?

MERROW: Maybe.

HOLMES: Maybe, yeah, maybe.

MERROW: There are three levels of teacher training institutions. There's normal school, normal college, normal university. Normal college and normal university train teachers for middle schools and for above that. Normal school trains teachers for primary schools. What's normal school? Basically, it's middle school. That is, it's the equivalent of high school. That means that in the Peoples Republic of China, in order to teach primary school, all you have to do is graduate from high school.

Think about that a minute. That means that what at least for many Americans is the most important level of all, primary school or the early years, here, all you have to do is graduate from high school in order to be certified as a teacher of those young kids.

The combination of these attitudes, that is, those young people who don't want to be teachers at all, those young people who want to teach at the highest possible level, plus the fact that teaching primary school, you don't even have to go to college or university, that says something about teacher training here at the Peoples Republic of China, and about the status of teaching and about their whole approach to pedogoguery.

* * *

REINHARDT: Next in this special Options in Education series, a visit to China's best-known university, Peking University, where Chairman Mao once worked as an assistant librarian. Then in Part Six, we'll introduce some of the millions and millions of Chinese who are learning English.

Hope you'll be with us.

You can get your own copy of this series. It's available in transcript from for $3.00. The cassette recording costs $15.00. Our address is National Public Radio - Education, Washington, D.C. 20036. Let me give you that information again. The complete transcript of all six programs is $3.00, the cassette recordings of the entire series, $15.00. Send your check or money order to: National Public Radio - Education, Washington, D.C. 20036. And please tell us the call letters of your own local NPR station.

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I am Barbara Reinhardt, and this is NPR, National Public Radio.

Program No. 192: "EDUCATION IN CHINA, FIVE"

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	1
PREPARATION FOR PEKING UNIVERSITY ENTRANCE EXAM John Merrow talks with students at Peking University and others getting ready for the all-important three-day entrance exam	1-9

REINHARDT: What books do you read?

STUDENT: Some famous short stories of American writers, for example, The Blue Hotel.

MERROW: By Stephen Crane.

STUDENT: By Stephen Crane, yes, that's right. We also have that English literature, for example, poems of Wordsworth, William Wordsworth. And some (comments) for Shakespeare, very short --

REINHARDT: Shakespeare, Dickens, Wordsworth, Stephen Crane -- they were all strangers to Chinese students during the ten years of the cultural revolution. The study of Western authors is a sure sign that education and politics have changed in the Peoples Republic of China.

I'm Barbara Reinhardt for NPR's Options in Education, with Part Five of our special report on education in China. In this program, a visit to colleges and universities. There are only about 600 of them in all of China. Next year's freshman class will total about 300,000, chosen from seven million applicants.

PREPARATION FOR PEKING UNIVERSITY ENTRANCE EXAM

STUDENT: Since 1977, we have an examination if we go to university. If you don't get high marks, I don't think you can go to university to study.

MERROW: Everybody takes the same test?

STUDENT: Yes, same tests. Everybody take the same examination.

MERROW: In the United States, those tests are graded by a machine. You make little marks on the paper and then a machine grades them. But that is not so in the Peoples Republic. You write them out, you write out your answers.

STUDENT: It is so different from your country, I think.

REINHARDT: My co-host, John Merrow, was in China for two weeks, visiting schools, colleges and universities. He talked with lots of students, some already in college, others getting ready for the three-day entrance exam.

During the cultural revolution, 1966-1976, the exams were abolished, and students were chosen because they were good Marxists, or because their parents were peasants or soldiers or workers. The goal was to end the elitism that characterized Chinese education. Today, the test is most academic, but there are still questions like this one: Why is it that countries having a dictatorship of the proletariat must practice democracy on the people and impose dictatorship over the enemy, criticize the revolutionary crimes of the Gang of Four, in reversing the relations between ourselves and the enemy, and for imposing a Fascist dictatorship on the people?

The exams are graded three times, first by the local government authorities, then by the Party, then last, by the college or

university. At the first two levels, students whose politics are incorrect will be eliminated from consideration for admission. The luckiest of those who go on will attend Peking University, China's best-known. John spent a day there.

MERROW: This is one of 24 reading rooms in Peking University's library. The library has 3,200,000 volumes, with closed stacks. The library is open ten hours a day. This reading room has about 12 long tables, pretty crowded. Students apparently have brought their own books. There are no bookcases in here, no reference works. You just read what you brought in, apparently.

This is the teachers' room. Is this where teachers do their work? And I see --

STUDENT: Post-graduate students.

MERROW: Post-graduate students.

STUDENT: Who are reading some of the reference books in these rooms.

MERROW: I see Encyclopedia Americana and, I think, other encyclopedias. There's Britannica and there's other encyclopedias in different languages. What is students want to work with these books?

STUDENT: They borrow from the library to use the books.

MERROW: They would fill out a card, and then would be able to get a copy of it?

STUDENT: Yes.

MERROW: But most people --

STUDENT: Two students cannot enter these rooms, but they can borrow the books.

MERROW: There's a big difference between a reading room for a student and this room. The reading room for the student had no books.

STUDENT: No. You will see the (comments) is for the students. There are also some textbooks and reference books and other books. But these books is very few. They cannot open to all the students and the teachers, so they use them for the teachers and the faculty members.

MERROW: These are not exactly high-level reference works that are being kept here for the teachers' use. Encyclopedia of Education, Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences. There's a World Book Dictionary, 20th Century Dictionary, Dictionary of Phrases, Random House Collegiate Dictionary, yearbooks from different countries, Australia, so on, here's older Americana and Britannica Encyclopedias. All pretty standard reference works in a reference room in a college.

Here, probably the best university in all of the Peoples Republic of China. They're in the teachers' room.

STUDENT: These rooms are for the students, for the social science students.

MERROW: Social science students. This is like a reference room, yes? This is --

STUDENT: (Comments) from the reference books.

MERROW: There are some bookcases here with reference works. There really is a striking difference between reference rooms. And this one for students has a lot of the basic historical material about Chinese history. Apparently this is for social science, this room. And there are card catalogs. The faculty reference room has far more basic documents, the encyclopedias, dictionaries, yearbooks.

This library has 3,200,000 volumes. We're in the stacks right now. This is the best library in Peking? The best library?

STUDENT: No.

MERROW: No? What's better?

STUDENT: The National --

MERROW: The National Library, ah, uh-huh.

STUDENT: -- is the most --

MERROW: More volumes? More up to date? How many volumes there?

STUDENT: I think this is one of the most -- the best library in --

MERROW: In all of China?

STUDENT: Yes.

MERROW: One of the best. Tell me what courses -- what is the course of study here at this college, at this university? What subjects does a student study?

STUDENT: Just the English subjects?

MERROW: No, everything.

STUDENT: Okay. Everything, we have English, Chinese, physical culture, political study, politics, politics and general survey of the American and British history, maybe, and geography and history.

REINHARDT: John found the teachers at Peking University a little embarrassed on the subject of entrance standards during the cultural revolution. Students who got in because of their politics or because of their high-ranking father or uncle are called 'back-door students.' One woman admits that a number of students came to universities through the back door, but now, she says, everyone's chances are equal.

WOMAN: There was some phenomenon as going by back door to send some people to college through -- some people that they know -- or they have relatives to work in the government department, or the department concerned. And they have some channels to send through the people.

MERROW: Some what?

WOMAN: I don't know how to say it. Channel?

MERROWS: Channels, channels, yes, I see. They send in people whose parents were high-ranking -- yes?

WOMAN: Not necessary high-ranking. Sometimes not necessarily high-ranking. But some -- they say some important people -- not important, but some people in charge of something, in charge of things that are concerned with school.

MERROW: But they also had to be politically well and intellectually well?

WOMAN: For few of them, maybe they were not up to the qualification.

MERROW: But the politics comes first.

WOMAN: Yes.

MERROW: Is that still true?

WOMAN: So at the time, the intellectual quality was neglected.

MERROW: What about now? What about today?

WOMAN: Today, everyone who apply for college must pass through a examination.

MERROW: Are they also tested for the political knowledge, for their political standards?

WOMAN: Oh, yes. The examination include political examination.

MERROW: Uh-huh. But which is more important today, intellect or politics?

WOMAN: I think both. Yeah, we encourage students to be both Red and expert.

MERROW: Red and expert.

WOMAN: Yes, Red and expert.

MERROW: To get into a school like this, you've got to take the entrance exam. That's three days and three nights, in six different subjects. Once you're here, there are a lot of support system to keep you here. There's also a modified work requirement. I say modified because during the cultural revolution, students spent as much as a third to half of their time working. Now, two to four weeks a year, and the work experience, at least in theory, is tied to the kind of things that a student is studying. Therefore, a computer student would go work in the local computer factory, chemistry students would work in the chemistry workshop here on campus, making materials hat will then be used in laboratories.

Students also go work in the fields, though, especially at harvest time, and, I'm told, so do faculty members and administrators help out in the fields.

These are students in a special English class. They're all first year university students, ranging in age from 20 down to 16. Right now, I'm talking with about ten or twelve, and I'm interested in the question of whether -- you were sent off to the countryside to work. In my country we hear a great deal about how Chinese students combine school and work. During the cultural revolution or even very recently, have you gone to the countryside or gone to work?

STUDENT: Yes. And du.ing -- I was studying in the middle school, I went to the countryside for -- twice or more, and we call it (comments) school, to learn from the peasants.

MERROW: How long were you there?

STUDENT: At most, one month. One time, one month.

MERROW: One time, one month. And the other time?

STUDENT: The other time was half a month.

MERROW: And you?

STUDENT: The same. The same to him.

MERROW: Anybody else who went out to work, went to the countryside?

STUDENT: I used to go to the countryside to work about once a week.

MERROW: Once a week?

STUDENT: Once a week, once a week. I almost spent about half a day to work. But during the summer, I used to cut wheat or something.

MERROW: What did you learn? What were you learning when you went to the c.untryside?

ST.DENT: Oh, I just learn how to cut wheat. I couldn't cut well because I cut my fingers.

MERROW: What did you learn by going to the countryside?

STUDENT: I learned to ride horse, ride horse, and sometimes I rode donkey. And sometimes I learned how to drive a tractor. But I think it is very difficult to drive a tractor. I remember once, I almost crash it. So since that, I've never drive it again.

MERROW: But the goal -- but Chairman Mao's goal in wanting people to go to the countryside was for you to understand what it is to be a peasant. And for you not to be contemptuous, not to look down on the peasants, yes? Did you learn that?

STUDENT: Yes, we learn -- we know how the peasant live, and how the peasant work. And so we should learn from them how to work hard, and a peasant work and they live very hard.

MERROW: You are university student. You are better off than the peasants, yes?

STUDENT: What is -- say it again?

MERROW: You're a university -- you are all university students. You are much better off than peasants, yes? Better off.

STUDENT: Better off. What is --

MERROW: Luckier. You have more advantages.

STUDENT: Oh, yes, I think I am luckier.

STUDENT: I think, although we are luckier than them and we still -- we will still learn from them, because they do hard work every day, and they work very hard. So I think the peasants in China have a special spirit. I don't know how to say this kind of spirit. I think -- I'm sure I must learn from them.

MERROW: You would not like to live the life of a peasant all the time.

STUDENT: Well, no. But I want to change the harder life of the country into a better one, like the cities.

STUDENT: Now we live in the city, and I think in the future, peasants will live a place which is like a city.

REINHARDT: Those first-year university students still have a work requirement, but it's greatly reduced from the days of the cultural revolution, 1966-1976. Then, university students spent up to half their time doing physical labor.

But China has not completely reversed itself. It still follows, at least in part, Chairman Mao's directive to combine work and study. The cultural revolution hit colleges and universities hardest, probably because they represented to Mao the worst counter-revolutionary attitude, bourgeois elitism. Peking University may have been a special target, because Mao had worked there as an assistant librarian, and never forgot how the faculty snubbed him for his peasant background.

At Peking University, 145 of the 177 faculty members were punished during the cultural revolution. Several died during their persecution. Today, order is restored on campus, and the emphasis is on training a technical and scientific elite. The old ways are back. Former faculty members have been restored to prestigious jobs. Enrollment is only 80 percent of what it was before the cultural revolution, but it's rising fast. And there's a type of placement service for all the students. When they finish, they will have jobs.

STUDENT: See, in our country, everything is carried out according to an all-around plan, a national plan. The same case with assignment. Every year, our government will work out a plan, how many people are needed here, how many people are needed there, and with a consideration of their own interests and their own condition they will assign this work, to work somewhere.

MERROW: So they won't say, we need Miss Cu, they would say, we need so many people who speak English, and you are one of them, so you would go.

50

MERROW: Does that mean that they don't consider what you want? I mean, for example, suppose you were going to marry and the man you were going to marry lived in Shanghai. But the directive might come down and say, Miss Cu, we need you in the north of China, go there tomorrow. Would you be able to say, no, no, wait a minute, wait a minute, I want to get married, I want to get married?

STUDENT: Yeah, for the authority part, they always give a lot of consideration to the individual, to the need of the individual, to the want of the individual, and to the condition, the certain specific condition of the individual people. But we encourage everybody to take the need of the country first.

MERROW: So if you were a teacher, and a directive came down, Miss Cu, you're teaching now in Yangchow, but we want you to go teach outside of Naning, would you be able to say no, I would like to stay here, may I stay here?

STUDENT: Oh, yes, you'll be able to say. And if you have some difficulties, you can tell these to the leaders and the authorities. And you can talk it over with them. And they can find a way out. But I say what most of the people do is, they would give the first consideration to the country's interest, rather than their own interest. So sometimes a lot of them give up their own interest to serve the country.

MERROW: A couple of numbers will give you an idea of higher education in the Peoples Republic of China. One, seven million high school graduates every year. That is, seven million graduates of middle school. Two, 300,000 openings for those students in universities and colleges across the Peoples Republic of China. That's nearly 25 students for every place in the university or college.

Now, in fact, the situation is worse than that, because there is always a backlog. The students who graduated from middle school last year or the yea before, or the year before, who didn't get in and who still want to get in and who are going to take the exam, last year six million people took the exam. This year, they're expecting more.

Now, at this university, Peking University, probably the best university in all of the Peoples Republic of China, there'a freshman class of 2,000, total enrollment of 8,000. In fact, thousands and thousands more could handle the work here. But they can only accept 2,000. In all of China, there are only 600 universities and colleges, 87 are designated as key universities. And that means that in addition to the regular requirements to get in, students must also pass a foreign language requirement.

Now, China has a leg up on the United States in some ways, even though it doesn't have enough space in colleges and universities. It has invented and discovered and created a lot of other forms of post-secondary education, including short courses which are open to all kinds of people, including branch colleges and universities, which are at a much lower level, apparently, including television university -- there are 20,000 people enrolled in the television course that's offered in Peking.

There are also colleges and schools in factories, places like that. So there are a whole other variety of post-secondary education

institutions here in the Peoples Republic. But there clearly are not enough spaces in the colleges and universities.

Most of the people who might want to go to the university cannot go. There is not enough room. What happens to them?

STUDENT: Because universities -- not enough school and universities for the young people to come to study, and for the young people (comments). The other people don't go to university to study. They stay at a certain factory, a certain commune, to take part in the physical labor and to continue their work.

MERROW: But they must be angry, they must be disappointed.

STUDENT: I don't think, I don't think they will be angry, because, you know, every young people have to want to go study, but also they have the other -- I call it spirit and other fine ideas. If they don't go to university and they stay in the factory, in the commerce, for their study, and --

MERROW: That's very hard for an American to understand. I mean, I want to be a doctor and I want to take -- or a nurse, take the test, and I -- it would be very hard to go back to a factory, to go back and work. But you think if --

STUDENT: If they are -- some are young, they can try two or three times, yes. And if they try, they cannot go to study, then they work in the factory or the commune or in other places.

MERROW: And you think, not disappointed, not angry, not --

STUDENT: I don't think so. They won't be disappointed. (Comments) themselves, they know how -- about the studies he is having himself, you know.

REINHARDT: Those two young professionals, in a hospital in Canton, are stressing the positive. In fact, Chinese high school graduates who don't do well enough on the college entrance exam to get into college, may suffer a second disappointment. They may be assigned to work in the countryside if there aren't enough jobs in the city factories.

In 1977, between one third and one half of the graduating high school class was assigned to the countryside. There are reports that many of those sent-down students are not only angry about the system, but also see themselves as failures. China is now putting extra resources into colleges and universities, to train a scientific and technical elite. It is also eliminating the two-year work requirement between high school and college for the best students.

STUDENT: Many students now go to a college, university, directly from middle school, you know.

MERROW: Do you approve?

STUDENT: Yeah, I approve, yeah. It's good for the education. I think it's better for the students, the academic development.

MERROW: What about developing the love of the people, the love of

the land?

STUDENT: Yes, it's encouraged in Mao students to love labor and love laboring people, to our country and the socialism, you know.

MERROW: But they might learn that better if they went out to work, that was the idea, yes? They'd go off and work and they would learn those things firsthand, they would not just be in school all the time. Wouldn't it be perhaps better to have some work?

STUDENT: Yeah, during their study, their schooling, they have some period to work, maybe four or six weeks during the year, to work on a farm or factories.

MERROW: There seems to be a lot of emphasis in the People Republic on short courses, night school, factory colleges, learning things on your own.

STUDENT: If you adhere to the principle of working -- are too lax in education, we have diversity of education. (Comments) who have too many young people and not enough of universities and colleges, so have to give the young people some other means of education.

MERROW: Explain what you mean, walking on two legs.

STUDENTS: Walking on two legs, one is formal college and education. The other leg means the other forms of education, maybe the night school and the short course and some other --

MERROW: When I walk around in the morning, I've seen people practicing the trumpet or singing or practicing reading English aloud or German. That's the other leg. That's part of it, too, yes? They are teaching themselves, or practicing?

STUDENT: That's another leg.

MERROW: That's another leg.

REINHARDT: Walking on two legs, one, formal university study. The other, an informal type of lifelong learning where people educate themselves without straining the system that's already desperately short of schools and teachers.

WOMAN: Pride goes before a fall.

STUDENT: Pride goes before a fall.

WOMAN: Pride goes before a fall.

STUDENT: Now, next. Discontent is the first step in progress. (Comments.)

REINHARDT: If you'd like a copy of this six-part Options in Education series on the Peoples Republic of China, send three dollars for the transcript, $15.00 for the cassette recording. Write us at National Public Radio - Education, Washington, D.C. 20036. The complete six-part transcript, with a bibliography, three dollars. The cassette

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I am Barbara Reinhardt, and this is NPR -- National Public Radio.

Program No. 193: "EDUCATION IN CHINA, SIX"

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	1
CHINESE PEOPLE WANT TO LEARN In the final segment of O.I.E.'s special report from China, we look at the increased emphasis on higher education and the broad interest of the Chinese people to learn.	2-14

"EDUCATION IN CHINA, SIX"

WOMAN: Good afternoon.

STUDENT: Good afternoon.

WOMAN: Good, good.

STUDENT: No. Good evening. Good, good, good.

MERROW: No, not good-a. Good.

STUDENT: Good.

WOMAN: Good.

STUDENT: Good.

WOMAN: Good.

STUDENT: Good.

* * *

REINHARDT: An impromptu English lesson in a hotel in the Peoples Republic of China. One of the impromptu teachers in my co-host, John Merrow, who spent two weeks in China, visiting schools and colleges. He discovered that lots of Chinese, young and old, are learning outside of school, in hotels, in their homes, on street corners.

I'm Barbara Reinhardt for NPR's Options in Education, with Part Six of our special report on education in the Peoples Republic of China.

MERROW: How do you do?

STUDENT: How do you do?

WOMAN: How are you?

STUDENT: How are you? Fine, thank you, and you?

MERROW: Good.

STUDENT: And you? And you?

MERROW: And you.

STUDENT: And you, and you.

MERROW: It's a question. And you?

STUDENT: And you? Fine. Thank you.

MERROW: Thank you.

STUDENT: Thank you.

MERROW: Thank you.

STUDENT: Thank you. Thank.

WOMAN: Lesson Two.

STUDENT: Lesson Two.

MERROW: Oh, yes.

STUDENT: (Comments.) I study, I study English.

WOMAN: Uh-huh.

STUDENT: Lesson One.

MERROW: Lesson One? Lesson Two is going too far. You've just started, okay.

STUDENT: Lesson Two (comments).

MERROW: Would you do Lesson Two?

STUDENT: (Comments.)

WOMAN: Goodbye.

STUDENT: Goodbye.

WOMAN: Goodbye.

STUDENT: Goodbye.

MERROW: Goodbye, yes.

CHINESE PEOPLE WANT TO LEARN

REINHARDT: China has 213 million students who attend school for their education. Ninety-five percent of Chinese children attend primary school, but only about 40 percent go on to secondary school. Only two to three percent of the college-age young people go to college.

The low percentages don't necessarily reflect a lack of interest in higher education. The larger problem is not enough teachers and not enough schools to accommodate everyone who wants to learn. China has an educational policy of walking on two legs -- one, traditional classroom learning, the other, informal education, in factories, in communes, three or four week courses that might meet in a park or a town hall, and other alternate programs, like the manuals that are distributed to all hotel workers, so they can study English.

Workers aren't the only ones learning English. Millions of Chinese learn our language, starting in primary school, usually at age nine.

MERROW: Tell me, describe for me how English is taught in the middle school.

STUDENT: Well, we have textbooks, and the teacher will demonstrate how to pronounce and how to spell English and ask us to try to memorize the text.

MERROW: To memorize the text?

STUDENT: Yes, to memorize. But it is simple. They say that middle school students, the text is very short.

MERROW: So they would learn questions like -- they would learn conversations, hello, how are you, how many in your family, what does your father do?

STUDENT: Yeah, yeah, just questions like that. Conversations.

MERROW: Dialog. Well, did you converse in English in your class? Did you make up conversations or was it only the conversations that you memorized?

STUDENT: We are asked to make up some simple conversations.

MERROW: What is your question? You ask me. How are you?

STUDENT: I'm very well, thank you.

MERROW: How old are you?

STUDENT: I'm 15.

MERROW: How many in your family?

STUDENT: There are four.

MERROW: Who are they?

STUDENT: There are father, mother, sister and I.

MERROW: What's your father?

STUDENT: My father is a PRA.

MERROW: And you? How are you?

STUDENT: How are you?

MERROW: I am fine, thank you.

STUDENT: I am fine, thank you.

MERROW: Oh, you are fine also, okay. How old are you?

STUDENT: Sorry.

MERROW: How old are you?

STUDENT: I'm 15.

MERROW: 15.

STUDENT: I am 15.

MERROW: How many in your family? How many people in your family?

STUDENT: There are four.

MERROW: Who are they?

STUDENT: They are mother, father, brother and so I.

MERROW: What does your father do? What's your father?

STUDENT: He is a worker.

MERROW: What's your mother?

STUDENT: He is --

MERROW: She, she.

STUDENT: Oh, she is a worker.

MERROW: What's your brother?

STUDENT: My brother a student.

MERROW: Here, at this school?

STUDENT: No.

MERROW: Where? Where is your brother a student?

STUDENT: Where --

MERROW: Where does your brother go to school?

STUDENT: My brother go Nanging, Nanging.

MERROW: Nanging. Thank you.

REINHARDT: Those secondary school students have memorized conversational patterns from a book. They're in trouble if you go off the track. Every Chinese student studies English in middle school, but what's remarkable about the Peoples Republic is the number of people who are learning English on their own.

John found lots of self-taught English speakers with varying degrees of proficiency.

MERROW: You have taught yourself English.

MAN: Yes.

MERROW: When did you start? How old were you when you started to learn?

MAN: Oh, six month ago.

MERROW: Six months ago?

MAN: Oh, yes.

MERROW: Wow, yes, that's -- using the radio?

MAN: No, by myself.

MERROW: By yourself, using books?

MAN: Yes.

MERROW: That's excellent.

MAN: I hope you will come to China again.

MERROW: Thank you very much. I hope so, too.

MAN: (comments) Four years ago I studied English language in the Foreign Institute. Upon graduation, I went to Iran and studied Persian language.

MERROW: Studied Persian in Iran?

MAN: Uh-huh, in Iran.

MERROW: So you now speak three languages.

MAN: I think my Persian language is better than my English language.

MERROW: I think your English is very good. What do you do now? Where do you work now?

MAN: Now I am working -- I haven't got any working -- I'm just prepared to go abroad again.

MERROW: You're not working right now, you're --

MAN: No, I'm just do some self-study in the home, and study Persian language and English language. Which country are you from?

MERROW: I'm from the United States.

MAN: United States, yes. Glad to meet you.

MERROW: Yes, it's very nice.

MAN: You are good friends.

MERROW: Yes, and I am learning a great deal about the Peoples Republic of China.

MAN: It's very kind of you.

MERROW: But it's a very impressive country, all you have done.

MAN: Thank you very much.

MERROW: Do you hope to go to the United States some day?

MAN: I think in future, if I have any chance, I would gladly go and to make friends, to promote a friendship between our two countries.

MERROW: Thank you very much. Goodbye.

MAN: Goodbye.

MERROW: We are tourists, we are visiting. How long have you studied English?

MAN: I studied English by myself for two years.

MERROW: In your factory.

MAN: Yes.

MERROW: What kind of factory?

MAN: Printing factory.

MERROW: Do you work at your English, do you study your English every day?

MAN: Yes.

MERROW: How many hours?

MAN: Once again, please?

MERROW: How many hours a day?

MAN: Two weeks.

MERROW: How long every day for studying?

MAN: Oh, two hours.

MERROW: In your factory there are 600 workers, and 24 study English?

MAN: Yes.

MERROW: And when you study, you study in the daytime or in the nighttime?

MAN: In nighttime.

MERROW: Do you all work together when you study? I mean, do you all study together?

MAN: Yes, yes, we are.

MERROW: What do you do? Tell me how you study. Would you all speak English?

MAN: Once again, please.

MERROW: What is the class like? What do you do when you are studying?

MAN: We study for the four modern (comments).

MERROW: No, that's not my question. If I went to your class, what would you be doing? Would you all be talking or writing? How do you study? How do you study English?

MAN: I study -- we study English in class, talk about our father, mother and my brother and sister, and so on.

MERROW: And so on. Would you like to go to the United States some day? Would you like to go to the United States some day? I have come to China. Would you like to go to the United States?

MAN: No, no. I can't.

MERROW: Why not?

MAN: Because I have no chance. I have no chance.

MERROW: Would you like to go to see the United States?

MAN: Yes, I like, I like.

MERROW: Thank you so much.

MAN: Not at all.

TEACHER: (Comments in French.)

REINHARDT: That's a French lesson on Radio Peking. It lasts 30 minutes. If you want, you can get an instruction book to go along with the broadcasts. There are also lessons in Japanese, Spanish and English. The English lesson comes on five times a day.

TEACHER: He looks young.

STUDENT: He looks young.

TEACHER: He seems happy.

STUDENT: He seems happy.

TEACHER: I feel sleepy.

STUDENT: I feel sleepy.

TEACHER: Leaves turn yellow in autumn.

STUDENT: Leaves turn yellow in autumn.

MERROW Where did you learn to speak English?

MAN: I learned English from Peking Radio.

MERROW: Ah, when do you listen?

MAN: I listen in the morning or in the evening.

MERROW: And each time is what, about 30 minute lesson?

MAN: 30 minutes, 30 minutes, yeah.

MERROW: And then, after you learned, did you come to work here?

MAN: Yeah, I work here now.

MERROW: Did you work here before you learned English?

MAN: Yeah, I learned some, learned later. (Comments) work here.

MERROW: So once you learn, then you are able to do a better job?

MAN: (Comments.)

MERROW: Once you learn English, then you can do a better job.

MAN: Yeah, I learned English for my work.

MERROW: Was it hard to learn?

MAN: Yeah, hard to learn.

MERROW: English is a hard language?

MAN: Hard language?

MERROW: Is English a difficult language to learn?

MAN: No, not very difficult.

MERROW: No. Chinese is difficult, I think.

MAN: You think, but I am sure.

MERROW: May I ask how old you are?

MAN: Hm?

MERROW: May I ask you how old you are?

MAN: I'm 27.

MERROW: And you learned English how many years ago?

MAN: Two years ago.

MERROW: You speak very well.

MAN: Thank you very much.

TEACHER: What is the story about?

STUDENT: It's about a young woman singer.

TEACHER: When and where did it all take place?

STUDENT: It all took place on a day after Premier Chou En Lai's death, in a hospital in Peking.

REINHARDT: Radio Peking extends to rural China, where in some places it's possible to study a language three or four times a day. But a more portable method of learning languages is to carry a book of mimeographed lessons for reading on the bus, or on the job.

STUDENT: Lesson Three.

MERROW: Lesson Three.

STUDENT: Arrival at Naning Hotel.

MERROW: Arrival at the hotel.

STUDENT: How do you do?

MERROW: How do you do?

STUDENT: Excuse me, are you Mr. Smith?

MERROW: Yes, I am Smith.

STUDENT: Yes, I am Smith.

MERROW: I am Smith.

STUDENT: I am Smith.

MERROW: Let's do Lesson Four. This is called Study for the Revolution.

STUDENT: We are a\ ıdants. We love our work. We study English for the revolution. Do you speak English?

MERROW: English.

STUDENT: English.

MERROW: English.

STUDENT: English. Yes, just a little. Does he speak English? Yes, he does. No, he doesn't, he speaks French.

MERROW: He speaks, speaks.

STUDENT: He speaks --

MERROW: He speaks.

STUDENT: He speaks --

MERROW: French.

STUDENT: He speaks French.

MERROW: Yeah, he speaks French.

STUDENT: He speaks French.

MERROW: How do you say this in Chinese? We study English for the revolution. In Chinese.

STUDENT: (Comments.)

MERROW: Now slowly, so I'll try it. Again, slowly, very slowly.

STUDENT: (Comments.)

MERROW: (Comments.)

STUDENT: (Comments.)

MERROW: (Comments.)

STUDENT: (Comments.)

MERROW: (Comments.)

STUDENT: Again. (Comments.)

MERROW: (Comments.)

STUDENT: (Comments.)

MERROW: (Comments.) It's very difficult, it's very hard for me.

STUDENT: Very good.

MERROW: Thank you, thank you.

REINHARDT: That impromptu lesson was held one afternoon in a hotel in the south of China. English wasn't part of the curriculum when most workers were in school, but now, the government wants its citizens to learn it. The Chinese want to learn lots of other things, too. There are short courses in everything from fixing a motor to learning Marxist Maoist thought. People who want to learn something as a group, organize, get permission from their work brigade, commune or factory organization, find a teacher and a place to meet, and start learning.

John found more startling, however, the technique many Chinese use for learning on their own. This man was practicing his German by himself in the park, early one morning.

MAN: (Comments.)

WOMAN: (Singing.)

MERROW: I think you have to try to visualize that. That young woman is standing in one corner of an entrance courtyard to the Forbidden City. Now, the entrance courtyard to the Forbidden City is about the size of five football fields -- well, maybe four football fields. And she's off in a litt[illegible] corner. There's a gateway, so she's out of sight, but everyone who walks by can hear her, of course.

It's a very private act she's doing, practicing vocalizing, singing. And people don't stop and stare. And I just did, I stopped and stared and walked over with my tape recorder. And I felt like an

intruder, like a voyeur, almost. She was entitled to that space, and I shouldn't have gone in, put myself into it. And the rest of the people -- everyone else respects her privacy. They don't stop and listen to find out where the voice is coming from, or walk over to see what's going on. Maybe curious Americans aren't used to that, an unselfconscious performance.

REINHARDT: If you get up early and walk about any Chinese city or town, you're sure to come across people studying and practicing just about everything -- Tai Chi, the trumpet, various languages, singing. You'll also see lots of people doing calisthenics, even jogging. Every morning at 6:00, Radio Peking wakens its listeners with the tune, The East Is Red, followed by positive messages about various triumphs in agricultural production and so forth. Then more music, more good news, and more messages about building the Socialist state.

That's not the only reminder of the citizen's duties.

MERROW: We're at the county headquarters now, and as just about everyplace in China, there are slogans on the wall. And these slogans on the gates just outside are, Long Live the Chinese Communist Party, on the left as you go in, and on the right as you go in, Long Live The Thought of Chairman Mao Tse-Tung. There are slogans everywhere, exhorting the people to do better, to develop, to continue the proletariat revolution, to commemorate particular heroes of the Chinese Communist Party, to increase production, to develop the Socialist state. They're not wall posters, they're not changed every month or every week. They're much more permanent than that.

Tell me what this slogan says.

WOMAN: The slogan of Chairman Wa. This is the slogan of Chairman Wa. The people of all the nationalities strive for, realize more powerful Socialist country.

MERROW: What's the purpose of the slogans? Why are they here?

WOMAN: Just call on the whole nation to work hard, to build our Socialist country into a powerful country, a more powerful Socialist country.

MERROW: Who puts up the slogans?

WOMAN: Hua Go Fung, Chairman --

MERROW: He said it, but who put it up? Who put it here?

WOMAN: The Revolutionary Committee of Unan County.

MERROW: Who decides what slogans go up on the wall? Is that decided in Peking, or can the county put up whatever it wants?

WOMAN: No, no, no. They think that can raise the peoples' consciousness, yeah. People like the slogan, then they put up this slogan.

MERROW: So this slogan might not be up in -- everywhere in China. This one might just be here?

WOMAN: No, that's depend on the Revolutionary Committee in that area. If they want to put up a slogan, they think this slogan is very useful to call on the people to strive for realize our powers. Then they set up the slogan.

MERROW: Will you translate for me the slogans in the next room, because I know there are some there, too. This is the dining room?

WOMAN: This is the reception room.

MERROW: What are some of the slogans here? I won't ask you to translate them all.

WOMAN: These are old quotations from Chairman Hua.

MERROW: Chairman Hua, not Chairman Mao?

WOMAN: Some of the quotation is from -- not Chairman Mao, Chairman Mao and Chairman Hua. For instance, this one is, Learn from Tai Ching and learn from (comments).

MERROW: Learn from --

WOMAN: Tai Ching.

MERROW: Tai Ching?

WOMAN: In industry, learn from Tai Ching.

MERROW: That was the place where there's a high level of production.

WOMAN: Yeah.

MERROW: And in agriculture, learn from --

WOMAN: Ta Chai.

MERROW: Ta Chai. That was an agricultural commune which had a very high level of production. That slogan is all over China, yes? Okay, what are some of the others?

WOMAN: Insist in the free great revolutionary movement. Class struggle, production struggle and scientific experimenting.

MERROW: Experimenting. And these are all over --

WOMAN: And also, strive to realize the purpose of building our country into a modern one in agriculture, industry, national defense and scientific technology.

MERROW: Now, do you know all these slogans?

WOMAN: Yes.

MERROW: When you see the sign, do you read them?

WOMAN: Yes, we read them from the newspaper.

MERROW: And do they make you work harder?

WOMAN: Yes.

MERROW: They do.

WOMAN: Yeah.

MERROW: You don't just after awhile get used to them and not even bother reading them?

WOMAN: No. Well, because everybody is very familiar with these slogans.

MERROW: Do you think they work? Do you think they are effective?

WOMAN: Yes, yes. I think so.

MERROW: Those slogans may or may not make the citizens work to create the new Socialist man and woman, but something has worked in the Peoples Republic. In 30 years since Mao's victory in 1949, China has freed itself from three basic fears -- insufficient food, insufficient health care and insufficient education.

Before the revolution, only 20 percent of the people could read. Now, 65 percent can.

REINHARDT: But Chinese education has a long way to do. True, 95 percent of its children go to primary school, but under 40 percent go to secondary school, only two or three percent to college.

MERROW: The cultural revolution, 1966 to 1976, broadened the base of Chinese education made primary school available to millions. But the tradeoff was disorder and confusion in secondary schools, colleges and universities.

REINHARDT: Now, under Chairman Hua and Vice Premier Teng, China seems to have abandoned Mao's goal of democratizing education. Now the emphasis has shifted to creating a trained technical elite in China. Primary schools may suffer cutbacks, but China's leadership is apparently willing to pay that price in order to modernize, to catch up with Russia and the West.

MERROW: That sounds like a formula for rapid change, and it probably will be in the cities. In the country, things will change slowly, if at all. And that will probably just widen the gap between city educational programs and facilities and their poorer country counterparts.

REINHARDT: Before we leave the Peoples Republic, we ought to ask what our educational system can learn from theirs. It sounds as if China has more imaginative alternative ways for adults to learn things.

MERROW: I think our primary and secondary schools might learn some valuable discipline techniques. Educators there say they have few discipline problems, and almost all of them are handled by talking things out in so-called criticism sessions, with administrators and students. There's lots of peer pressure to support the school and to work for its betterment and for the betterment of the community.

REINHARDT: The young pioneers must have a lot to do with that. They're sort of like Boy Scouts or Girl Scouts, but with real leadership roles in school.

MERROW: I saw at least a dozen classes being led by young pioneers, the same age as the rest of the class. A few times, before school was even in session.

One more thing. Chinese children really taught that all peoples of the world are friendly. It's indoctrination, they believe it, and act accordingly.

REINHARDT: Of course, China's educators can learn a lot from our system. First and foremost, that learning is a two-way street. The Chinese teaching method, -- Mao called it stuffing a duck -- assumes that the teacher knows everything, the student, nothing.

MERROW: It's good to know that the two countries have just reached agreement to exchange teachers and to study each other's schools. We are going to learn from each other, it seems.

STUDENT: (Comments.)

MERROW: (Comments.)

STUDENT: (Comments.)

MERROW: Now, what is see you later? I will see you later.

STUDENT: See you later, (comments). Tomorrow is (comments).

REINHARDT: The full transcript of this six-part series on education in the Peoples Republic of China is available for three dollars. It includes a bibliography. The cassette recording costs $15.00.

MERROW: Here's our address. National Public Radio - Education, Washington, D.C. 20036.

REINHARDT: The complete transcripts of all six parts, $3.00, the cassette recordings, $15.00.

MERROW: Send your check or money order to: National Public Radio - Education, Washington, D.C. 20036.

REINHARDT: And please tell us the call letters of your own local NPR station when you write.

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I am Barbara Reinhardt.

MERROW: I'm John Merrow, and this is NPR, National Public Radio.

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